

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8879

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG
CINCEUR VAIHINGEN

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LIMDIS/NOFORN

GENEVA FOR CSCE DEL; VIENNA FOR MBFR DEL; CINCUSAFE,
CINCUSAREUR, CINCEUR FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, ECON, GW

SUBJECT: ONE YEAR INTO BRANDT'S SECOND TERM: THE
RECORD AND THE PROSPECTS

SUMMARY: THE BRANDT GOVERNMENT, ONE YEAR AFTER ITS
RE-ELECTION, FINDS ITSELF IN A DIFFICULT AND UNCERTAIN
SITUATION. ITS DOMESTIC AND ECONOMIC PROGRAM SEEMS
TO HAVE RUN OUT OF STEAM. ITS FOREIGN POLICY, ONCE THE
KEY TO THE GOVERNMENT'S POPULARITY, HAS ALSO LOST ITS
IMPETUS. LOOKING AHEAD, THE PROSPECTS FOR NEW INITIA-
TIVES IN THE DOMESTIC AND ECONOMIC FIELDS ARE NOT
PROMISING; AND THIS AT A TIME WHEN THE INCREASING ENERGY
CRISIS HAS ADDED A MAJOR NEGATIVE FACTOR. ONLY IN
FOREIGN POLICY DO POSSIBILITIES SEEM TO EXIST FOR SOME
CHANGES WHICH MAY BE INTERNALLY ATTRACTIVE. IN PAR-
TICULAR, WE CONSIDER IT LIKELY THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL
MOVE TO AN INCREASED EMPHASIS ON WESTPOLITIK AS AN
ALTERNATIVE TO THE OSTPOLITIK, WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE
LOST MOMENTUM AS WELL AS PUBLIC APPEAL. THIS CHANGE
COULD BRING A NEW ATTENTION TO THE POSSIBILITY OF A
WESTERN EUROPEAN DEFENSE FORCE. END SUMMARY.

I. THE RECORD

1. THE POLITICAL SCENE IN BONN TOWARD THE END OF 1973, SECRET

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ONE YEAR AFTER THE SPD/FDP COALITION OBTAINED AN
INCREASED AND SOLID PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY IN FEDERAL
ELECTIONS, IS A CONFUSING AND UNCERTAIN ONE. THE
BRANDT GOVERNMENT IS APPARENTLY DRIFTING, WITH NO CLEAR
GOALS ESTABLISHED OR PURSUED, ESPECIALLY IN THE DOMESTIC
FIELD. THE FEEL OF POLITICAL BONN IS ONE OF UNEXCITE-
MENT AND LACK OF CHALLENGE.

2. IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN NOTABLY UNSUCCESSFUL IN PUSHING THROUGH IMPORTANT SOCIAL REFORMS. INFLATION CONTINUES DESPITE TIGHT MONETARY MEASURES WHICH HAVE BEEN ENFORCED. GERMAN SOCIETY IS TRYING TO THROW OFF SOME BURDENS OF THE PAST; REALIZATION IS GROWING THAT THE ECONOMIC MIRACLE OF THE 60'S HAS BROUGHT MANY PROBLEMS IN ITS WAKE: ENVIRONMENTAL DIFFICULTIES, WILDCAT STRIKES RESULTING FROM WORKER DISCONTENT, DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT OF GUEST WORKERS WHICH IS STRAINING THE POLITE FACADE OF SOCIETY; AND CONTINUING TROUBLE IN THE UNIVERSITIES. IN THE FOREIGN POLICY FIELD, EASTERN POLICY HAS BEGUN TO FADE IN IMPORTANCE IN THE PUBLIC MIND, AND NO OTHER FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVE HAS COME ALONG TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION, FAR LESS THE SUPPORT, OF THE GERMAN PUBLIC. IN TALKING TO GERMANS, YOUNG AND OLD, IN BONN THESE DAYS, ONE SENSES A VAGUE MALAISE ABOUT WHERE THE COUNTRY IS HEADED.

3. THE FEELING APPEARS TO BE BORNE OUT IN A RECENT
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LIMDIS NOFORN

ALLENSBACH POLL. ASKED WHICH PARTY THEY WOULD VOTE FOR IF ELECTIONS TOOK PLACE THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY, 38 PER CENT OF THOSE POLLED FAVORED THE SPD (COMPARED WITH THE 48 PER CENT THE PARTY OBTAINED IN LAST YEAR'S ELECTIONS) 49 PER CENT FAVORED THE CDU/CSU (VERSUS 45 PER CENT LAST YEAR); AND 11 PER CENT FAVORED THE FDP (VERSUS 6 PER CEN LAST YEAR).

4. THE PRESENT ATMOSPHERE IN BONN IS DOMINATED ABOVE ALL BY THE FEELING OF ABSENCE OF LEADERSHIP. AT PRESENT READING, THIS SITUATION DOES NOT SEEM LIKELY TO CHANGE. THE PERSONALITIES AND ISSUES INVOLVED DO NOT SUGGEST THAT ANY NEW OR RADICAL POLICY INITIATIVES ARE IN THE OFFING. THE REPORTED CHANGE IN FDP LEADERSHIP, I.E.

FROM SCHEEL TO GENSCHER, NEXT YEAR MAY BRING A SOMEWHAT MORE AGGRESSIVE STYLE TO THE MINORITY PARTY IN THE GOVERNMENT COALITION BUT SHOULD NOT ALTER THE BASIC PICTURE. PROBABLY THE ONLY SUBJECT THAT WILL GENERATE KEEN PUBLIC CONCERN IN COMING MONTHS WILL BE THE ENERGY CRISIS, BUT THIS IS NOT LIKELY TO BE A MATTER THAT WILL BRING THE GOVERNMENT MUCH CREDIT. UNDER THE MORE PESSIMISTIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT OIL AVAILABILITY IN 1974, THE WHOLE ECONOMY WILL BE THREATENED WITH A MAJOR BREAKDOWN STRAINING THE SOCIAL FABRIC AND OVERSHADOWING ALL ELSE.

5. OBVIOUSLY, NOT ALL OF THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS CAN BE LAID AT THE CHANCELLOR'S DOOR. INFLATION AND ENERGY SHORTAGES ARE PROBLEMS AFFECTING THE WESTERN WORLD.

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MANY OF THE STRAINS EVIDENT IN CONTEMPORARY GERMAN SOCIETY HAD THEIR ORIGIN IN EARLIER DAYS AND ARE SHARED BY OTHER ADVANCED INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES. FOREIGN POLICY IS A DIFFICULT AREA AROUND WHICH TO BUILD AN ATTRACTIVE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM, UNLESS THERE IS A KEEN SENSE OF NATIONAL INTEREST INVOLVED (AS DURING THE EARLY DAYS OF OSTPOLITIK) OR A VISIBLE AND IMMEDIATE THREAT APPARENT. THIS DOES NOT NOW SEEM TO BE THE CASE. AND, FINALLY, THERE IS NO REAL CHALLENGE FROM THE CDU/CSU OPPOSITION, EITHER IN TERMS OF PEOPLE OR PROGRAMS, TO ELICIT STRONGER LEADERSHIP FROM THE BRANDT GOVERNMENT.

6. BUT BRANDT HAS TO ACCEPT SOME OF THE BLAME. HIS EFFORTS TO KEEP THE MORE CONSERVATIVE FDP HAPPY IN THE COALITION GOVERNMENT HAVE LED TO A GUTTING OF THE SPD'S SOCIAL REFORM PROGRAMS. HIS OWN LACK OF ASSERTIVE LEADERSHIP HAS LEFT HIS PARTY AND THE GOVERNMENT GENERALLY WITH AN ABSENCE OF DIRECTION. DECISIONS IN KEY AREAS ARE MADE AND FORCED THROUGH BY THE VARIOUS MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE IN THESE FIELDS: E.G., HELMUT SCHMIDT MAKES ECONOMIC POLICY, SCHEEL--FOREIGN POLICY, GENSCHER--SOME AREAS OF DOMESTIC POLICY, AND LEBER--DEFENSE POLICY. THE CHANCELLOR'S CONTROL IS OFTEN MARGINAL AND IT IS ONLY WHEN HE IS AROUSED THAT HE IS WILLING TO ATTEMPT TO ASSERT HIMSELF. EVEN THEN, THE RESULTS ARE LESS THAN CERTAIN. IN THE RECENT PUBLIC DISPUTE OVER LEADERSHIP ISSUES WITH HERBERT WEHNER, FOR EXAMPLE, MANY OF THE PARTY LEADERS SEEMED TO SUPPORT WEHNER AND NOT BRANDT.

II. PROSPECTS

7. ONE SHOULD NOT CONCLUDE FROM ALL THIS THAT THINGS ARE DANGEROUSLY OUT OF CONTROL IN BONN. BARRING A MAJOR UPHEAVAL BECAUSE OF DRASTIC OIL SHORTAGES, THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP WILL PROBABLY BE ABLE TO STRUGGLE ALONG FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS, UNTIL THE 1976 ELECTIONS, FAIRLY MUCH AS THEY HAVE IN THE PAST YEAR. THERE WILL BE NO DRAMATIC CHANGES. DOMESTIC AFFAIRS WILL CONTINUE TO BE DISCUSSED HEATEDLY BUT THE GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE
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FEW NEW OR ENERGETIC INITIATIVES AND, APART FROM A POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF INDUSTRIAL CO-DETERMINATION, LITTLE IN THE WAY OF SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL REFORM SEEMS LIKELY TO EMERGE. ASSUMING SOME SOLUTION TO THE ENERGY PROBLEM, THE ECONOMY WILL CONTINUE TO DEVELOP SERIOUS BUT NOT UNMANAGEABLE PROBLEMS. THE STRAINS IN GERMAN SOCIETY WILL REMAIN AND MAY EVEN BECOME MORE SERIOUS, BUT NOT SO TO SUCH A DEGREE AS TO CAUSE MAJOR DISLOCATIONS OR CREATE REAL POSSIBILITIES FOR DESTABILIZING OR OVERTURNING THE SYSTEM, WHICH NOW HAS REASONABLY STRONG DEMOCRATIC ROOTS.
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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
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LIMDIS NOFORN

8. IN OUR VIEW, IT IS IN THE FOREIGN POLICY AREA THAT SOME CHANGE IN EMPHASIS MAY EMERGE IN THE PERIOD AHEAD. THE LAST FEW YEARS HAVE SEEN A PRIMARY FOCUS ON EASTERN POLICY. THIS OSTPOLITIK, BASED AS IT WAS (AND IS) ON NATIONAL AIMS, I.E. AT PREVENTING THE COMPLETE EROSION OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC'S LINKS WITH EAST GERMANY (AS WELL AS NORMALIZING RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS AND OTHER EE STATES, OF COURSE) CAUGHT THE IMAGINATION OF

THE WEST GERMAN PUBLIC. BRANDT MANAGED SUCCESSFULLY TO MAKE IT THE MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT OF HIS FIRST TERM, TO MOBILIZE THE PEOPLE BEHIND HIM, AND, IN EFFECT, TO WIN RE-ELECTION LAST YEAR BY RUNNING PRINCIPALLY ON THAT ISSUE. BUT THE EARLY EXCITEMENT OVER EASTERN POLICY IS NOW PAST HISTORY, AND THE CONTENTIOUS ISSUES THAT CRITICS CLAIMED WOULD PERSIST WITH THE SOVIETS AND THEIR EE ALLIES HAVE AGAIN RISEN ALL TOO VISIBLY IN RECENT MONTHS AND HAVE LARGELY DEGLAMORIZED THE POLICY. NOR IS THERE MUCH PROSPECT THAT THIS TROUBLESOME RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GERMANS AND THE USSR AND EAST EUROPEAN STATES WILL IMPROVE SIGNIFICANTLY IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

9. THE PROBLEM FOR BRANDT, THEN, IS TO FIND OTHER FOREIGN POLICY FIELDS WITH WHICH TO AROUSE PUBLIC INTEREST AND TO GAIN THE SUPPORT OF THE SWING VOTERS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM WHO HAVE COME INCREASINGLY TO WIELD THE DECISIVE WEIGHT IN FEDERAL ELECTIONS. HE KNOWS QUITE WELL THAT HE WILL NOT WIN AN
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ELECTION BY PUSHING THE TOPICS OF CURRENT DOMESTIC IMPORT, SUCH AS INDUSTRIAL CO-DETERMINATION, HOUSING REFORM, ETC.: HE OBVIOUSLY NEEDS SOMETHING CATCHIER. THERE IS GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE THAT HE FEELS WEST EUROPEAN COOPERATION TO BE THE ISSUE OF THE FUTURE. HIS RECENT PRPRONOUNCEMENTS(FOR EXAMPLE, HIS STRASBOURG SPEECH) SEEM TO MAKE HIM APPEAR AS LEADER OF THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION MOVEMENT. (WHETHER HE LITERALLY BELIEVES ALL OF HIS HIGH-FLOWN LANGUAGE IS ANOTHER MATTER, FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS NOT TAKEN ANY PRACTICAL STEPS TO PUSH INTEGRATION OR COOPERATION VERY FAR. BRANDT HIMSELF TOOK THE POSITION LAST WEEK THAT MORE COOPERATION SHOULD TAKE PLACE BUT NOT IF THE FRG HAS TO PAY FOR IT.)

10. THERE IS ALSO SOME QUESTION AS TO WHETHER THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS REALLY CAN EXCITE THE GERMAN PUBLIC TODAY AS IT DID THE GENERATION OF THE "FIFTIES". MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE OBSERVERS OF THE GERMAN SCENE BELIEVE THAT IT DOES NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT POPULAR APPEAL, AND THAT NEW EMPHASIS ON WEST EUROPEAN POLICY MAY NOT BRING WITH IT THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL BONUS BRANDT MIGHT EXPECT. BUT BRANDT MAY BE ADOPTING A STRONGER WESTERN EUROPEAN POLICY FOR OTHER LESS NARROWLY DOMESTIC, POLITICAL REASONS, I.E. ON STRATEGIC GROUNDS. FOR IT IS CLEAR THAT AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE PUTATIVE BRANDT WESTPOLITIK IS POTENTIALLY OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE TO US-EUROPEAN RELATIONS. BRANDT PROBABLY RECOGNIZES

BY NOW THAT THE SORT OF INCREASED WEST EUROPEAN POLITICAL COOPERATION HE IS PROMOTING WILL, IPSO FACTO, RESULT IN DIFFICULTIES IN THE US-EUROPEAN RELATIONSHIP. HE ALSO PROBABLY RECOGNIZES THAT SUCH DIFFICULTIES AS MAY RESULT WILL NOT BE POPULAR WITH THE MAJORITY OF THE GERMAN POPULATION, WHICH REMAINS BASICALLY PRO-US. BUT BRANDT MAY BE PREPARED TO TAKE THAT RISK, FEELING (AS MANY GERMANS ARE BEGINNING TO DO) THAT THE US COMMITMENT TO EUROPE IS NO LONGER A CERTAIN THING. HE AND MOST GERMANS, OF COURSE, HOPE THAT THE US SECURITY GUARANTEES WILL CONTINUE: WE PROVIDE THE SOLID FOUNDATION FOR MOST WEST GERMAN POLICY INITIATIVES AS WELL AS FOR THE FRG'S ULTIMATE SECURITY. THE PRESENT FRG DEFENSE MINISTER
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LEBER REPRESENTS THE PART OF THE GOVERNMENT THAT FEELS VERY STRONGLY THAT THERE IS NO REAL ALTERNATIVE TO THE US UMBRELLA. BUT THE CONFIDENCE OF THE BRANDT GOVERNMENT IN THE US GUARANTEE IS NO LONGER WHAT IT WAS. HENCE, IT MAY SEEK TO ESTABLISH A COMMON WEST EUROPEAN FRONT AS A POLICY SUPPLEMENT, UNSATISFACTORY THOUGH THIS MAY APPEAR IN COMPARISON WITH THE US RELATIONSHIP.

12. THIS SUGGESTS THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MAY NOW, RELUCTANTLY AND WITH MISGIVINGS, TRY TO COME TO GRIPS WITH WHAT FOR ALL OF THE POSTWAR YEARS WAS UNTHINKABLE, I.E. AN ALTERNATIVE TO COMPLETE DEPENDENCE ON THE US. BRANDT AND HIS ADVISERS OBVIOUSLY REALIZE THAT WESTERN GDS
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LIMDIS NOFORN

EUROPE'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION WILL NOT

BRING WITH IT ANY CONCOMITANT INCREASE IN SECURITY, UNLESS A DEFENSE ELEMENT IS PART OF THE PACKAGE. AND THIS BRINGS THEM QUICKLY TO THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM-- THE NUCLEAR FORCE ISSUE. WHILE BRANDT HAS PUBLICLY EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE PROSPECTS OF A EUROPEAN DEFENSE FORCE, INCLUDING NUCLEAR WEAPONRY, THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT SOME GERMAN LEADERS ARE BEGINNING TO THINK SERIOUSLY ABOUT THE SUBJECT.

13. IT IS INCONCEIVABLE TO US AT THIS POINT THAT THIS GERMAN GOVERNMENT WOULD ACTIVELY SEEK TO GO NUCLEAR, NOW OR IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE: THE CONSTRAINTS, POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL, ARE JUST TOO GREAT. BUT WE COULD CONCEIVE OF GERMAN SUPPORT FOR A UK-FRENCH NUCLEAR FORCE AS THE NUCLEAR KERNEL OF THE EUROPEAN DEFENSE FORCE (WITH THE FRG HAVING SOME GUARANTEES, OF COURSE, CONCERNING PRE-USE CONSULTATION, ETC.) WHILE OBVIOUSLY THIS SOLUTION IS NOT IN ANY MANNER IDEAL FROM THE GERMAN VIEWPOINT, WE THINK IT IS A DIRECTION IN WHICH THEY WILL BE INCREASINGLY PREPARED TO GO, PARTICULARLY IF THEY SEE THE US CONCLUDING ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE USSR WHICH SEEM TO DIMINISH THE VALUE OF OUR NUCLEAR GUARANTEE.

14. IF FRG POLICY DOES MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION, THE BRANDT GOVERNMENT MAY TRY TO DEVELOP IT FASTER THAN MOST EXPERTS HAVE FORECAST. EVER SINCE THE COLLAPSE OF THE EDC, THE CONVENTIONAL APPROACH HAS IT THAT A EUROPEAN
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DEFENSE STRUCTURE CAN COME ONLY AFTER POLITICAL INTEGRATION, WHICH WOULD ONLY FOLLOW ECONOMIC AND MONETARY INTEGRATION. BUT BRANDT HAS BEEN SPEAKING OUT RECENTLY IN FAVOR OF SPEEDING UP THE ENTIRE INTEGRATION PROCESS. ALTHOUGH HE HAS NOT SPECIFICALLY ADDRESSED THE THREE STAGES OUTLINED HERE, HIS COMMENTS SUGGEST A READINESS TO SEE THE THREE STAGES MELDED INTO EACH OTHER, WITH POLITICAL AND DEFENSE COOPERATION POSSIBLY BEING CONSIDERED TOGETHER, AND THIS CONCEIVABLY BEING DONE EVEN BEFORE FULL MULED
FOR 1980.

III. CONCLUSION

15. THE BRANDT GOVERNMENT FEELS IN A TIGHT AND UNCERTAIN SITUATION. THE WEST GERMANS WANT THE US TO REMAIN IN EUROPE, BUT ARE INCREASINGLY WORRIED ABOUT OUR INTENTION OR ABILITY TO DO SO. THE MUCH-DISCUSSED POSSIBILITIES OF A WEST GERMAN DRIFT TOWARD NEUTRALISM ARE NOT, IN OUR VIEW, UNDER PRESENT

CIRCUMSTANCES, A PRACTICAL POLICY ALTERNATIVE. BRANDT KNOWS THAT WEST GERMANY IS FAR TOO LARGE AND POWERFUL TO BE ABLE TO OPT FOR A SWISS MODEL. MOREOVER, ITS ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL TIES LIE IN THE WEST, SO THAT NEUTRALISM OR A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE USSR AND EASTERN EUROPE AT THE EXPENSE OF WESTERN TIES (WHICH IS WHAT THE NEUTRALISM ISSUE REALLY AMOUNTS TO) WILL NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE GREAT MAJORITY OF GERMANS. ACCORDINGLY, ONE IS LEFT ONLY WITH THE WEST EUROPEAN COOPERATION MOVEMENT. AND WHILE IT MAY PROVE NOT TO BE CATCHY POLITICALLY IN GERMANY, IT MAY WELL BE THE COURSE UPON WHICH THE BRANDT GOVERNMENT WILL FOCUS INCREASINGLY IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS.
HILLENBRAND

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